

Once More Unto the Breach



Recent history has proven that it is very difficult to predict precisely who our adversaries will be and when or where they might threaten the United States. The preliminary lessons learned from Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) suggest that U.S. forces achieved a level of combat power that is several multiples greater than even the enormously capable forces that were deployed during Operation Desert Storm over a decade ago. This fact reminds us that we have yet to realize the full potential of what our forces' capabilities will be in the future.

During March and April 2003, coalition and U.S. military planners crafted a strategy for Northern Iraq worthy of a gifted chess master. At stake in this "game" was the defeat of Iraqi forces north of Kirkuk and coalition control of the critically important Kirkuk oil fields. In his article, "Checkmate on the Northern Front," Major Brian Maddox describes the 1st Battalion, 63d Armor's role in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. During this deployment, task force leaders learned several key lessons for future air deployment of armor forces.

From what we have seen in Iraq, the United States defeated a country the size of California within a matter of weeks. This fact is not important — the way in which it was done is important. Captain Jay Pellerin explains the overwhelming "shock and awe" that tanks can have on the enemy. Recent events have proven once again that the U.S. military can achieve rapid dominance by using heavy units.

Captain Jason Miseli shares his experiences and frustrations with just-in-time logistics during Operation Iraqi Freedom. His article, "The View From My Windshield: Just-In-Time Logistics Just Isn't Working," explains that when soldiers cannot get more than one or two bottles of water per day, and must rely on locally purchased water and poor-tasting bulk water to meet essential sustenance, the just-in-time logistics system is not responding, let alone the abject collapse of the class IX repair parts resupply system. He also provides invaluable tactics, techniques, and procedures to make soldiers aware of their surroundings, which increases their chance of surviving during brutal attacks on convoy operations.

The approach used during OIF, reflects the concept of the battlespace replacing the concept of the battlefield. The battlespace concept produces critical requirements that demand commanders "know" their battlespace. Digital battle command is the perfect tool to provide commanders with the ability to navigate under lim-

ited visibility conditions, to move rapidly over great distances and synchronize their movement, and to communicate both vertically and horizontally over extended distances. In their article, "Blue Force Tracking — Combat Proven," Captains James Conatser and Thane St. Clair proclaim that during OIF, the Force XXI Battle Command Brigade and Below-Blue Force Tracking System gave commanders situational understanding unprecedented in any other conflict in history.

Stabilizing Iraq is not a uniform process and great progress has been made in some areas of the country. However, we continue to face an adaptive and determined enemy, though conventionally defeated, intent on killing Americans and Iraqis. In his article, "3d Squadron, 7th U.S. Cavalry Up Front — Lessons Learned During Operation Iraqi Freedom," Major J.D. Keith presents a few of the lessons learned by the squadron during this latest conflict that other divisional cavalry squadrons can capitalize on as they prepare for future missions.

Captain Matthew Kennedy and First Lieutenant McKinley Wood take us into their battlespace as they describe Task Force 2d Battalion, 69th Armored Regiment's "60 Hours in the Breach."

In keeping with this issue's lessons-learned focus, Captain Mike Sullivan and Master Sergeant Tom Pailliotet provide great insight on how to properly run a logistics package and offer helpful ideas on how to improve unit logistics battles.

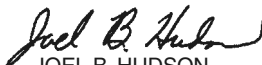
The debate over the Combat Armor Badge and the Expert Armor Badge has raged for decades. The issue has been brought forward during the tenure of every Army Chief of Staff since World War I. There is however a new twist to the on-going debate — there is no need to adopt new badges — we need to simply *reinstate* the armor badges. Captain Shawn Monien takes us through an 85-year historical debate that begins with the Combat Tanker's Badge, that was awarded to the "United States tankmen of 1918 who served in the organized American fighting Tank Corps," and ends with Operation Iraqi Freedom where Combat Infantry Badge ceremonies are being held for infantry soldiers who are attached to Armor units while their "brothers in combat arms" watch on.

We continue to devote military forces and other assets on the ground in Iraq. Perhaps winning the peace in Iraq is more challenging than winning the war. No one should have doubts about our maintaining a strong deterrent capability. — DRM

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